



introduction to *shamanism*



Welcome to the world of Shamanism!

I look forward to meeting you in class. I'm always curious about what brings you here. Many of us are seekers- looking for a higher way, a better way, an easier way? Shamanism can help you get where you wish to go. It is not religion, nor does it even have a dogma. Shamanism does have an extraordinarily long history with teachers and practitioners all over the world. The practice offers you many tools for you to choose as supports your journey.

Shamanism is the most ancient spiritual practice we know of. Born in antiquity, it still has amazing relevance and power in our modern times. You will likely not become a shaman but rather a practitioner of its ways as I am.

"We have reached a turning point in our progress as a nation and as a civilization. At this critical time in the life of our planet, our primary need is not for more data, doctors, or different technologies for industrial growth. Instead, we need *different people*— more heart-open people living from their spiritual center."¹

Shamanism to me is my path to inner me. I teach it from that perspective. It provides a point of view and a variety of practices that open your heart, connecting body, mind, emotions and spirit. It allows you to also share that connection, that energy and that great hope with others. Come along and take only what resonates with you and your path.

History of Shamanism

Since the beginning of human history, people developed practices and beliefs that would form the basis of what we now call shamanism. Evidence from archeology, like cave paintings and old objects, supports the idea that shamanism started back in the Paleolithic era, or Old Stone Age (2.5 million years ago and continued until 10,000 BCE). Our ancestors hunted and gathered moved around a lot, living closely with the natural cycles and the animals they relied on to live. They dealt with their world's challenges not only with physical ability and smarts but also by tapping into the spiritual world which was as real to them as the physical.

Shamanism first appeared in Siberia and Central Asia among tribes of hunters and gatherers. The shamans from these areas were thought to have special powers to connect the human and spirit worlds. Their practices, like drumming, chanting, and using plants that change consciousness, allowed them to talk to spirits of nature or ancestors for healing, guiding hunts, predicting the future, affecting the weather, and more. These shamanic beliefs in the spirit of things and ancestors, along with methods like drumming and dancing for spiritual visions, spread from northern Asia to other places over centuries through trade, moving people, and cultural exchange.

Shaman's role

Understanding the shaman's role is important as we begin to learn about these practices. In different cultures, the shamans played different roles but in general, one led in the area to which they were skilled. So a tribe might have a healer who is knowledgeable with herbs and also someone who was wise in matters of mental health. Some shamans were seers and some managed the weather. Some were the ones who could pull the tribe together to sing and dance. Some were tribal artists. You might think that all those roles fell to one person, but what was not always the case.

As the tribe moved to a new location, the shaman(s) were the leaders. They looked at what the people would need- what plants were plentiful and what purposes they could serve. What food was available? And how did the people as a community need encouragement.

A shaman's role was always to connect with spirit but honestly that also was everyone's role. The spirit connection belongs to all people, all plants and animals. Modern society took that at personal connection to spirit away. So as we study shamanism, understand you're not so much adding new skills as you are uncovering skills that you've always had. Our power comes in finding our way back to nature and to our spiritual self

Skills of the shaman

There are many books written that delineate all the skills used by shamans. I have listed 3 of my favorite books in the reference section but seek out more knowledge as it calls to you. Here we can only touch on the basics.

The shaman was the go-to man or woman that the tribe went to when they couldn't sort out life, challenges or dreams on their own. People who heard voices or had visions weren't considered mentally challenged, they were considered gifted to be receiving info from the spirit side. Some of a shaman's skills might include: dream interpretation, managing weather, seeking signs of times to hunt or to move the camp, understanding healing plants, knowing times for and leadings ceremonies, rituals and celebrations.

Shamans are healers but not always in the way you might think. When we are ailing, we go to a doctor who gives us a pill and we go home and hope for the best. "Medicine" in tribal times wasn't necessarily a pill or potion. The shaman knew the ones who came to them. The shamans sought to understand if the seekers were happy, if their life was well balanced, if they felt secure in their role in the community. The shaman might have a ceremony for the one seeking healing. In those ceremonies, sometimes the shaman would journey to spirit for answers but sometimes the shaman assisted the seeker to journey to find their own solutions on the other side. Sometimes the community would journey together seeking answers.

The shaman helped the community by reinforcing the belief in all that was spiritual/magical. Often the shaman dressed in a particular way, especially during ceremony. The seeker might also be asked to wear a special garment or be painted or ornamented in a unique way. The shaman used sound, scent, movement, words, fire, water, nature, wind to "set a stage" where one could believe that change could come.

Shifting consciousness

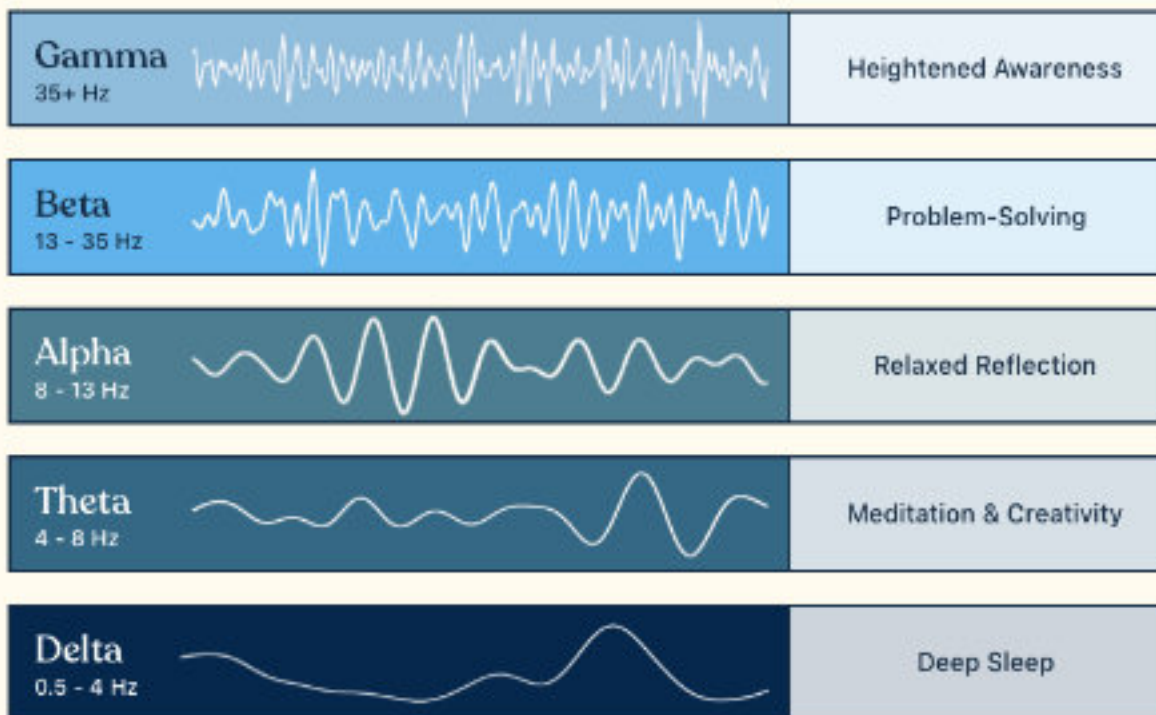
In shamanic traditions as in many spiritual practices, we must create change/healing we must shift not only the physical realm but also the spiritual. We must open doors, release bonds and help others believe there can be more than their reality right now, which is feeling pained to the seeker in some way. Shamans used sounds, smells, fire, dance and even plant medicines to help the seeker find more of themselves. It is common today to hear of people using plant medicines to awaken to higher consciousness. However, in the shamanic traditions, plant medicine is used to shift consciousness in only about 10% of the time. Shamans most often use rhythm and sound to help us reach into the spiritual realm

Drumming

Drums and rattles are very powerful to a shaman's work to shift consciousness and create deep meditative states. How they understood in ancient times, we don't exactly know but today we do understand the science behind this powerful practice.

Our brains produce energy as a vibration, or brain waves. There are five types of brain waves: Delta (± 0.5 to 4 Hz), theta (4-8 Hz), alpha (8-13 Hz), and beta (13-35 Hz) and gamma (35 Hz and up.)

Human Brainwaves



Our brainwaves are often in Beta during daily life. I remember that by thinking Busy Beta. When we work on relaxing or meditating, we can move down into Alpha (which also would be the brainwave of being in a flow state) or Theta (deeper meditation.) Entrainment is a term which explains how things in a particular rhythm or cycle tend to synchronize with similar objects in rhythm nearby. So a room full of pendulum clocks will all tick tock together. Women who live in the same house will find their menstrual cycles begin to coincide. Brainwaves will also entrain to a steady rhythm of a drum or rattle.

So the shaman will play a drum or rattle at a particular rate, I use about 4 hz, which is 240 beats per minute. This is a powerful tool to help you relax and slow down your busy brain.

The Shaman's Journey

Journeying is the term used for the way that a shaman reaches into the spiritual realm or leads a seeker or a community to connect with their higher selves. Using sound, the shaman creates a peaceful environment where body can rest and heart and mind might open to higher wisdom.

Traditionally, shamans journey to one of three levels of the spiritual realm. Each world has its particular vibe and ways to interact but I find that each person interacts differently with these other worlds. Remember, shamanism isn't about dogma or rules. Just suggests to explore how you might engage with more. As a starting point, here's some typical suggestions

Lower World- a place we might be animal or spirit helpers. This realm is often powerful for physical healing, releasing trauma and transformation. It is often pictured as a place of nature and we access it by going down.

Middle World- this plane is perceived as being just like our world but with no veil between us and the spiritual aspect. So we might see fairies and other elementals. Here we can work with the past and future of nature and our world.

Upper World- the realm of the cosmos, the stars, the heaven. One goes up to get here and is often accompanied by a spirit helper. This is the place of higher perspectives, rising above what might be holding us back. We often can see more clearly our spiritual selves.

How to Journey

The journeyer generally reclines so that the body can totally rest and relax. Lying on a bed or on the floor with some padding and blankets is common. Lights are dimmed and interruptions minimal. The seeker sets an intention- what they are hoping to accomplish from this journey. Note, often your intention isn't exactly fulfilled but it sets a direction.

Beginners generally journey to the lower world for starters. But whichever world you are venturing to, try these steps. Remember to put on your child's sense of play and imagination.

1- Imagine a safe place in nature to find your entry to the other world. Caves, openings in trees, water or other points work well. These can be places you've really been or imagined places. Go through your entry place. If you're visiting the lower world, you'll often find yourself moving or sliding downward. Relax and go with it. If you're traveling up, you might find yourself floating up in a bubble or riding the back of a giant bird.

2. Let your imagination run free. If at anytime you feel uncomfortable or frightened, you just tune back into the drum and your original intention. Or you can just sit up and open your eyes. This is one lovely advantage of not working with plant medicine. You can end a journey any time you wish.

3- Don't get too wrapped up in "Is this real?" or "Am I just imagining this?" Likely the answer to both questions is yes. We are exploring unexplored lands within you. Relax and enjoy it.

4. When the rhythm of the drum changes dramatically (I use 4 heavy booms) that is your signal to begin journeying home. You just imagine retracing your steps or sometimes you'll just be back in your blankets again. The drumming then stops after a few minutes and your drummer might speak to you to help you reconnect with this world. Grab a journal and write down what happened as these experiences will fade just as dreams do.

Spirit Guides

Often people will speak of their spirit guides or spirit animals. These are beings we might connect with while on a journey. Some traditions teach that if you encounter an animal three times in the lower world, then that animal is your spirit animal. If that resonates with you, then go with it. Some meet angels, or wise beings. Some encounter kind alien beings.

I often see beings and am accompanied by animals but if you ask me who my spirit guides are or which is my spirit animal, I have no answers. I am one who comes back with a great sense of knowing in my heart but I don't consciously communicate with an animal or being outside myself. I believe I journey within and that my connections to all wisdom is within myself. So if you don't meet your angel and get their name, don't worry. It's not important, at least in my experience. What is important is that you find, imagine, open to more. You will imagine visiting a beautiful place- lower, middle or upper world. You have some experience that gives you insight you haven't had before. All truth and wisdom is already in you. You don't need to call in something or someone from far away unless that action feels more right to you. The goal here is for you to understand how you best interact with spirit.

Summary

Shamanism is a step back to the world before what is divine was taken from us and place in the role of a being who was far away. Your wisdom, divinity, holiness, awakening, enlightenment is all within you. You were born with it but just never taught to use it. Hopefully this basic intro to shamanism might help crack open the door to your great wonder and power. And if your door has been opened, may this help you allow it to swing wider open. The world needs you now to help it continue to elevate. It is time and you are ready.

Thanks for joining me.
Much love and light to you on your journey.

suni

SuniMoon.net

Check resources for links to videos, meditations and more



References-

Three books I love about shamanism and healing.

1- "The Lost art of Heart Navigation- a modern shaman's field manual" - Jeff D. Nixa
This one is a heart opening story of modern or practical shamanism that I found so helpful

"Awakening to the Spiritual World- The shamanic path of direct revelation" - Sandra Ingerman & Hank Wesselman

Sandra Ingerman has decades of experience teaching and living shamanism. In this book she calls on other shamans or practitioners of shamanism to share Their insights and experiences on many subjects. It's a beautiful way to hear form the modern and the traditional, the tribal and the personal.

"Imagery in Healing- shamanism and modern medicine"- Jeanne Achterberg

This book is on the list because it resonates with me as I am primarily a healer. It speaks to the power of understanding the healing power of belief and how we can assist each other and ourselves to heal in these transformational times.

Here's one of my drumming tracks to journey with-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRDUw8r7Ym8>

You might also google Sandra Ingerman Youtube Drumming for lots of choices.

There is a beautiful History of Shamanism online that you might enjoy.

<https://shamanicsupply.com/pages/the-history-of-shamanism>

About suni

Since I was young, I've been on a quest to learn. My mission is to remember and understand the mystical world- seeking insight into mysteries beyond ordinary human knowledge. I've studied sacred writings of many traditional religions, shared in Lakota ceremonies, trekked thru the Andes to learn from descendants of the Incas. I've trained in many healing modalities- energy healing, sound therapy, massage, qigong and more. I've followed the Yogic path beyond the poses to go deeply into meditation and breathwork. I've worked with gurus, shamans and wise men and women all over the world. I've wandered deep into mother nature learning to listen to the trees and receive power from the earth below and the sun and moon above.

Thru all this exploration, I look for simple truths common to many paths. I embrace the power of sound, the wonder of meditation, the strength of our breath and the essential need for self-care on a daily basis. These ancient tools are presented in new ways that suit the energy of our times. I share these tools with you to help you expand, awaken, heal, calm and explore the wonder of the unseen, the less known world.

The most important truth I've learned is that higher wisdom, connection to spirit, awakening, enlightenment isn't something you get from someone else. You came with all that built into you. Life in a world wrapped in fear and greed didn't likely help you find that message. In today's changing world, in the new energies here to help elevate our world- the wisdom, the light you seek is within you. The simple practices I teach are intended to help you connect your physical you and the higher self. That can happen easily and, it grows with practice. The practices are easy and they bring you what you need. Just looking for some hope, or calmness- then you'll find tools here that will help. If you're seeking higher wisdom or to journey to other energetic worlds, that is available to you also.

I am your guide and I share with you what I've learned. You might not resonate with some of the practices. You might really connect and decide to explore further on your own. Great! My path was carved with the teachings of many, many beings and I trust you'll find the path that suits you. Have fun

Image from Wiraqocha temple near San Pedro de Cacha. I served as high priestess for my group of journeyers. Notice no flowing robes, no fancy anything and it was the most powerful ceremony

